



Sixteen-year-olds

by **Stefano Paolocci**

The Argentinean-Canadian writer Alberto Manguel noted in his book “The Library at Night” that “One man’s experience can become, through the alchemy of words, the experience of all, and that experience, distilled once again into words, can serve each singular reader for some secret, singular purpose.” ...



Stefano Paolocci

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Personally, I would eliminate the conditional in his proposal altogether. On the other hand, how is it possible to disagree with someone who, already working at the Pygmalion Central Library of Buenos Aires at the age of sixteen, had been chosen to read aloud to a well-known blind visitor at his home? But above all, how can one do it knowing that the “well-known blind visitor” was Jorge Luis Borges? But it is this sentiment which is truly representative of the story that I would like to share.

A few months back, during the editing of the first issue of our safety magazine, “SafeBull”, we identified as a case study an event that was ideal for a new magazine stimulating and relatively critical. The protagonists were two aircraft that, due to adverse weather conditions (fog) and increasing departure requests, had accumulated long delays. When they were finally authorised to taxi to the take off runway, the first of the two, which was near the

Holding Point, asked to do an “engine run-up.”

It should be noted that this was not unusual and was approved by the TWR controller after satisfying himself that there was a safe distance behind to protect the second (following) aircraft from any jet blast hazard. Precisely at this point, however, the Runway Visual Range suddenly began to decrease and Low Visibility Procedures came into force. This required increased separation between taxiing aircraft and, consequently, the taxiing authorisation already issued to the second aircraft should have been reformulated. Unfortunately, this did not happen and so, in this middle ground no longer guaranteeing the separation previously applied nor the required new one, the occurrence took place – an initial abrupt braking and then, later, following the investigation of the circumstances, a broader study on potential mitigating procedures for ground movement in LVP during sudden and unforeseen significant deterioration in visibility.

From the point of view of a lesson learned, everything was absolutely perfect: we had the experience of an event and the alchemy of words that, through our magazine SafeBull, had communicated the widely.

However, something was missing, something which Alberto Manguel had chosen to insert that something

at the very end, almost to warn those who might conclude that the emotional transfer that allows what is written to be absorbed into one’s own experience is a consequential phenomenon and therefore not to be pondered.

Nothing could be more wrong, because now the question was: how could that experience, included in the first issue of SafeBull, be “distilled once again into words (to) serve each singular reader for some secret, singular purpose”?



SafeBull is a new safety magazine produced by the Safety - Report & Communication Unit of ENAV Italy. Born to help operational air traffic controllers to share in the experiences of other controllers who have been involved in ATM-related safety occurrences, it is issued four times a year.



Once again, SafeBull was the solution when, in gathering material for the "Safety Alert" section of the magazine for its second issue, we came across something very similar to the event discussed in the first issue. It was so similar that, apart from the visibility conditions and the specific aircraft involved, the location was identical and there was the same "run-up" request during taxi.

What immediately struck us was why, at that airport, at that position, do some aircraft need to request a "run-up"? Was there a situation we should understand? We discovered that MD80 series aircraft operated mainly by Italian or Spanish airlines, needed to operate their engines at a thrust setting above the usual taxi setting under certain weather conditions (low temperature or high humidity) or following

ground de/anti-icing in order to "clean" the turbines. However, such thrust increase did not correspond to the normal meaning of a "proper" "engine run-up" which could create a significant jet blast hazard and which would normally be carried out in an area of the airport identified exclusively for the purpose.

After this discovery, many things began to become clear, even if the question

related to the jet blast risk was still important. In fact, apart from the aforementioned "run-up" request at the active runway Holding Point, the run up in the new event had a sequel - the pilot had subsequently lined up without clearance after wrongly believing that he had received clearance to do prior to beginning the approved "run up".

So why not propose whilst "distilling (the experience) once again into words" that pilots use the term "power check" if needing to follow this power assurance procedure during low temperature, elevated humidity or after ground de/anti-icing? And that is what happened! Through our magazine, we made such a proposal in the Safety Alert section and, to our surprise, found that many readers had had the same idea.

And thus we closed the circle that Alberto Manguel, had identified long before us. Compared to this great writer at sixteen years old, we had surely at most read aloud, "Where the Streets Have No Name", thinking we were in Los Angeles on the roof of a liquor store when we were in fact in front of the bathroom mirror attempting to overcome the infinite shyness of our age. **S**

